

Appl. No. 10/754,323
Supplemental Amdt. dated April 5, 2010
Further to our March 11, 2010 Reply to
Office action of September 29, 2009

REMARKS

Claim 13, the only independent claim in the application, has been amended to further define the invention over the prior art.

The claim now points out the function of the curved portion of the cantilevered locking latch (40) is to delay contact of the latch (40) with the side of the slot (23) when connector (21) is stabbed through the slot (23) to lock with an opposing connector (22) already in the slot (23), and to latch onto the main beam (20).

As pointed out in the specification and drawing, such curved portion of locking latch (40), with the resulting delay, permits positioning of the connector (21) vertically within the slot (23) while free from the substantial frictional forces that resist such positioning where there is early contact with the slot, as with the straight locking latch of the prior art.

The locking latch of Lickliter '957 not only does not delay contact with the slot, but on the contrary, accelerates contact with the slot. The Lickliter '957 locking latch is formed of a segment folded back on itself, so that two thicknesses of latch, sprung apart by a fold at the leading edge, must pass through the slot, with early contact by, not only one, but two thicknesses of latch.

The Sauer '379 patent cited as prior art has a locking latch that immediately contacts the side of the slot, as the latch is being inserted in the slot. The latch (finger 64) is

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designed so that a straight lower edge of the finger 64 bears against side of slot (20) (column 4, lines 33-38 of Sauer '379). There is no curved portion, nor delay as the locking latch (finger 64) passes through the slot, as in the presently claimed invention.

In the prior art, the locking latch on the second connector into the slot makes early contact with the side of the slot, so that the second connector into the slot is pushed against the first connector already in the slot. When the second connector into the slot is in forced contact with the first connector into the slot, the vertical adjustment of the second connector requires much work to overcome the friction encountered by contact with the first connector already in the slot, during the vertical adjustment of the second connector in the slot.

In the present invention, the second connector (21) into the slot (23) is adjusted vertically in the slot (23) free of the friction forces referred to above in the prior art, that require work to overcome, since there is a delay in contact of the locking latch (40) on the second connector (21) against the side of the slot (23). Hence the second connector (21) into the slot (23) is free to be adjusted vertically in the slot (23) without encountering friction from contact with the first connector (22).

When it is considered that thousands of connectors are used daily in the construction of suspended ceilings, which are now universally used in commercial and industrial construction, the

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savings in work necessary to construct such ceilings are
enormous.

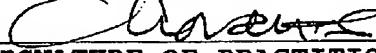
Enclosed herewith is an Affidavit and Statement of Gale E. Sauer, which are self-explanatory.

Please enter this Supplemental Amendment, and the Affidavit and Statement of Gale E. Sauer in the file of the subject application in further response to the Office action dated September 29, 2009.

5 April 2010

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Respectfully submitted,

SIGNATURE OF PRACTITIONER

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